

# San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

## Administrative Change 1

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Administrative changes, as defined at 36 CFR 219.13(c), are not plan amendments or revisions, do not require the preparation of a document under Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures, and may be made at any time following public notice (219.16(c)(6)). Administrative changes include the following:

- Corrections of clerical errors;
- Changes to ensure conformance with new statutory or regulatory requirements; and
- Changes to other content in the plan (219.7(f)).

### Background for Administrative Change 1

Aquatic Ecosystems and Fisheries: There is a need to clarify the intent, purpose, and application of the standards and guidelines in the Aquatic Ecosystems and Fisheries section of the Forest Plan to affirm the following:

- The standards and guidelines are not intended to limit or compromise authorities under State and Federal law.
- The Forest Service will use collaborative approaches to meet these standards and guidelines consistent with memorandums of understanding that have been established between the Forest Service and the State of Colorado.

Standard 2.5.18 in the Aquatic Ecosystems and Fisheries section of the Forest Plan contains four options for identifying a minimum flow rate to maintain aquatic population viability where certain fish species occur. The first three options listed describe specific methods for determining sufficient stream flow, while the last option provides for using any alternate method that would maintain sufficient flow. The order in which the options are listed has caused confusion; the intent was not that these options be used in any particular order, but that the most appropriate option is used for each specific situation. The options have been reordered so the option providing for “alternate” methods is listed first. While this change in no way modifies the application, intent, or purpose of Standard 2.5.18, it brings this option forward so users are more aware of its availability.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: A number of collaborative groups in southwest Colorado are in the process of developing various options for management of rivers in the region that were found to be suitable in the Forest Plan for designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers. These efforts are noted in Appendices to the Forest Plan and in the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement; however they were not noted in the Forest Plan. In the Wild and Scenic Rivers section of the Forest Plan, language has been added emphasizing that the Forest Service can consider alternative management approaches that are recommended by other entities or groups that

provide appropriate river management and protection for the stream segments determined to be suitable.

## Changes

1. Insert the following language on page 60 of the Forest Plan, below Objective 2.5.17:

### Standards and Guidelines

The following standards and guidelines are designed to maintain ecological integrity and provide for sustainable aquatic ecosystems, maintain biological diversity and manage habitat to maintain viable populations of aquatic vertebrates. These standards and guidelines are not intended to limit or compromise authorities under State and Federal law.

As noted in the introduction to Section 2.5, the USFS will utilize cooperative and collaborative approaches to meet these standards and guidelines. For example, the USFS will work with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and the Colorado Water Conservation Board, consistent with MOUs that have been established among these parties, to identify and develop potential management options for meeting Standard 2.5.18 and Guideline 2.5.22 that also take into consideration water availability, impacts to water yield, and alternative flow protection programs and tools. The phrase “should occur” in Standard 2.5.18 refers to those aquatic species for which there is evidence of historical occurrence, and is intended to reflect the climate, geology and natural biota of the area, consistent with Desired Future Condition 2.5.4. Determinations of where such species “should occur” shall be made in dialogue with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

2. Page 60, at the end of the first paragraph of Standard 2.5.18, correct typographical error referring to 2.5.19a–2.5.19d to refer to 2.5.18a–2.5.18d.
3. Page 60-61, reorder the options in Standard 2.5.18 so that Option 2.5.18d is now 2.5.18a, Option 2.5.18a is now 2.5.18b, Option 2.5.18b is now 2.5.18c, and Option 2.5.18c is now 2.5.18d.
4. Page 61, change the heading for Table 2.5.3 to refer to Standard 2.5.18c.
5. Page 197, insert the following language as a separate paragraph after the fourth paragraph:

The suitability determinations listed below are interim administrative recommendations that USFS and BLM may forward to their respective chief/director, Cabinet Department Secretaries, and the President for further review, possible modification, and transmission to the U.S. Congress for action. While these recommendations remain in this status, USFS and BLM can consider and pursue alternative management direction that may be recommended by other entities and/or individuals that provides appropriate river

management and protection for the stream segments determined as suitable. Alternative management approaches that would affect the classification of river segments found suitable, impair or modify the identified outstandingly remarkable values, or alter the suitability determinations, would be subject to the appropriate environmental review and plan modification processes.

6. Page 197, delete the following sentence from the paragraph beginning with “These rivers...” (this language is redundant to the new language being inserted above):

These rivers may eventually be designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System by the Secretary of the Interior or as the result of an Act of Congress (Secretarial designation requires that the state governor make application to the Secretary of the Interior)

Revised pages to the Forest Plan are attached below.

- 2.5.11 Abundant Colorado River cutthroat trout populations are maintained and other areas are managed for increased abundance.
- 2.5.12 Threats to Colorado River cutthroat trout and its habitat are eliminated or reduced to the greatest extent possible.
- 2.5.13 The distribution of Colorado River cutthroat trout is increased where ecologically, sociologically, and economically feasible.

### **Objectives**

- 2.5.14 Annually evaluate seven streams (five streams on NFS lands and two on BLM lands) for adequacy of instream flows sufficient to maintain population viability and otherwise achieve LRMP direction.
- 2.5.15 Annually enhance or restore at least 4 miles of stream habitat (3 miles on NFS lands and 1 mile on BLM lands) to maintain or restore the structure, composition, and function of physical habitat for USFS and BLM sensitive species or USFS MIS species.
- 2.5.16 Over the life of the LRMP, connect at least 10 miles of fragmented stream habitat (8 miles on NFS lands and 2 miles on BLM lands) to provide for aquatic species movement.
- 2.5.17 Over the life of the LRMP, establish two self-sustaining meta-populations on NFS lands, each consisting of five separate but interconnected sub-populations. In addition, establish one new population in each Geographic Management Unit within the historic range (Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Task Force 2001).

### **Standards and Guidelines**

The following standards and guidelines are designed to maintain ecological integrity and provide for sustainable aquatic ecosystems, maintain biological diversity and manage habitat to maintain viable populations of aquatic vertebrates. These standards and guidelines are not intended to limit or compromise authorities under State and Federal law.

As noted in the introduction to Section 2.5, the USFS will utilize cooperative and collaborative approaches to meet these standards and guidelines. For example, the USFS will work with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and the Colorado Water Conservation Board, consistent with MOUs that have been established among these parties, to identify and develop potential management options for meeting Standard 2.5.18 and Guideline 2.5.22 that also take into consideration water availability, impacts to water yield, and alternative flow protection programs and tools. The phrase "should occur" in Standard 2.5.18 refers to those aquatic species for which there is evidence of historical occurrence, and is intended to reflect the climate, geology and natural biota of the area, consistent with Desired Future Condition 2.5.4. Determinations of where such species "should occur" shall be made in dialogue with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

### **Standards**

- 2.5.18 Where native or desired non-native fish species occur, or should occur, a minimum level of aquatic habitat shall be maintained by identifying the minimum flow rates required to support that habitat using at least one of the following four options (2.5.18a–2.5.18d):
  - 2.5.18a. Stream flow in each reach shall be maintained at levels that have been determined using alternate methods and where it can be clearly demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the USFS and/or BLM, that said flows will be adequate to achieve the LRMP's goals and objectives for population viability and sustainable aquatic ecosystems.

- 2.5.18b. From April 1 through September 30, an instantaneous minimum flow equal to 40% of the average annual flow; from October 1 through March 31, an instantaneous minimum flow equal to 20% of the average annual flow (Tennant 1972).
- 2.5.18c. Stream flow in riffle habitats shall be maintained at levels that maintain the minimum values for mean water depth, wetted perimeter, and mean velocity, as defined in Table 2.5.3, for each stream size category (e.g., bankfull width).
- 2.5.18d. Stream flow in each reach shall be sufficient to maintain a minimum of 50% of the weighted usable area, for each life stage of each target species (USFWS 1984). The weighted usable area baseline (100%) will be the amount of habitat that would occur under natural, unaltered flow conditions.

**Table 2.5.3: Metrics Applicable to Standard 2.5.18c**

Bankfull Width (feet)	Mean Depth (feet)	Wetted Perimeter (%)	Mean Velocity (feet/second)
1–2	≥ 0.2	50	1.0
21–40	0.2–0.4	50	1.0
41–60	0.4–0.6	50–60	1.0
> 60	> 0.6	> 60	1.0

- 2.5.19 Prior to use in other waters, all agency, partnering agency, and contractor field equipment having had contact with whirling disease waters must be decontaminated using current decontamination procedures.
- 2.5.20 To prevent the spread of chitrid disease, established decontamination protocols must be used when working in waters and water influence zones for current and historic breeding sites for all sensitive and listed aquatic and amphibious species.

### Guidelines

- 2.5.21 Agency actions should maintain or improve all existing habitat for designated conservation populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout (Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Task Force 2001).
- 2.5.22 Minimum pool levels should be established for water storage facilities where aquatic USFS MIS and/or BLM or USFS sensitive species occur.
- 2.5.23 Except where barriers are beneficial and necessary to achieve conservation goals for certain aquatic species, fragmentation of aquatic habitats and isolation of aquatic species should be avoided.
- 2.5.24 Sediment delivery to streams occupied by MIS or threatened, endangered, or sensitive species should be avoided.
- 2.5.25 Activities that may cause sedimentation to amphibian habitats should be minimized.
- 2.5.26 Drainage of acid-mine runoff into riparian areas and wetland amphibian habitats should be avoided.
- 2.5.27 Agency actions should avoid or mitigate impacts within 100 feet of boreal toad (*Bufo boreas boreas*) breeding sites between May 15 and September 30 (breeding season).
- 2.5.28 Agency actions should maintain or improve hydrologic function and water quality of known and historic breeding sites for all sensitive and listed aquatic and amphibious species to provide for effective habitat.



### 3.9 Wild and Scenic Rivers

#### Introduction

Congress enacted the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) in 1968 in order to preserve the free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) of select rivers. The WSRA directs that each river in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System be administered in a manner that protects and enhances its outstanding natural and cultural values. The WSRA allows existing uses of a river to continue and future uses to be considered (as long as the use does not conflict with the protection of river values).

WSRA Section 5(d)(1) directs federal agencies to consider the potential of all rivers and streams for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System during their planning processes. All streams and rivers within the planning area were assessed as to their WSR eligibility and suitability. The FEIS describes the process used for the planning area (also see Appendix D for additional details).

In order to be found suitable for WSR status, rivers must meet the following criteria:

- they must be free-flowing (not in a reservoir and having mostly natural banks);
- they must have at least one ORV (ORVs can be in relation to fish, wildlife, recreation, scenery, ecology, cultural, historic, and/or other resource);
- their free-flowing character, water quality, and ORVs should be protected, even if there are other competing uses; and
- their WSR status would be the best method for protecting their ORVs.

During the planning process, the SJNF and TRFO determined the appropriate development level of rivers within the planning area. This was based on water resources development, shoreline development, and accessibility. These constitute a river's classification as "wild," "scenic," or "recreation." Table 3.9.1 lists the rivers that have been found to be suitable for WSR status (see also Figure 3.9).

The suitability determinations listed below are interim administrative recommendations that USFS and BLM may forward to their respective chief/director, Cabinet Department Secretaries, and the President for further review, possible modification, and transmission to the U.S. Congress for action. While these recommendations remain in this status, USFS and BLM can consider and pursue alternative management direction that may be recommended by other entities and/or individuals that provides appropriate river management and protection for the stream segments determined as suitable. Alternative management approaches that would affect the classification of river segments found suitable, impair or modify the identified outstandingly remarkable values, or alter the suitability determinations, would be subject to the appropriate environmental review and plan modification processes.

The identification of rivers as suitable through this land management planning process does not trigger any water rights or other protections under the WSRA. In order to manage the rivers for their potential inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System, existing authorities will be used to protect the identified river's free-flowing character, water quality, ORVs, and recommended classification (details of the interim protective management are listed in FSM 1990.12\_80 and BLM Manual 6400). Previous land management plans had similar direction and have provided protection for the ORVs of the Los Pinos River, the Piedra River, and the Dolores and West Dolores Rivers over the past several decades.

**Table 3.9.1: Miles of River Segments Suitable for Wild and Scenic River Status by Class**

River Segment	Agency	Wild	Scenic	Recreation	Total
Dolores River - McPhee To Bedrock	BLM	48.33	23.10	36.89	108.32
Coyote Wash	BLM	7.60			7.60
<b>Dolores Totals</b>		<b>55.93</b>	<b>23.10</b>	<b>36.89</b>	<b>115.92</b>
Animas River - Bakers Bridge to Sultan Creek	FS			27.19	27.19
Mineral Creek	FS			8.65	8.65